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Prologue

[image]

"Flurrykit! Don't look at them!" her mother, Dappleclaw hissed angrily. Her brother, Shadekit, and her sister, Blossomkit, nodded in agreement, turning their heads away.

Flurrykit had been looking out of the nursery entrance, where a pale brown tabby tom had his tail curled around a bright ginger tabby tom's. They obviously liked each other... Were they friends?

"Flurrykit! I told you not to look at those two! Never do that again!" Flurrykit looked away, then turned to her mother. "Dappleclaw, are they..." She asked.

"... Mates?" Dappleclaw sighed. "Yes, and it's horrible." Flurrykit nodded along to her mom's words.

"All cats please come to the Fallen Tree!" Hawkstar's voice rang out. Dappleclaw seemed to be happy for a distraction. "It's time. You're going to become an apprentice, along with Blossomkit and Shadekit! Isn't that exciting?!" And with that, Dappleclaw herded her three kits out into the clearing and sat down next to her mate, Liongaze, a tawny golden tom.

"Flurrykit, you will now be known as Flurrypaw, and your mentor will be Flamefang." As she reached to touch noses with him, she faltered for a moment. Flamefang was the ginger tabby who she'd seen earlier! Her tail tip fluffed up a bit, but she touched noses to her new mentor anyway.

A/N~ cat pictured above is Dappleclaw~

Chapter 1

[image]

"Come on Flurrypaw! Time to go train!" Her mentor, Flamefang meowed.
Flurrypaw groaned. She shook her calico pelt and got up, following her mentor out of the apprentice den. She desperately hoped that his mate, a pale brown tabby tom, would not be nearby. Unfortunately, he was the guard at the entrance to camp. As they nuzzled each other a bit, she thought, EWWWW. Then they headed out of camp.
Flamefang got started right away. "Okay Flurrypaw, today we will be practicing your hunting technique. Go out and hunt; I'll be in the trees near you to watch, so I don't scare off any prey. Got it?"
"Yep." Flurrypaw immediately began to scent the air. Suddenly, another cat knocked her over. "Hey!" she yelped.
"Oh my StarClan, I'm so sorry! Your tail was rustling some leaves and I thought it was prey. Forgive me?"
Flurrypaw's mouth opened in surprise. On top of her was a gorgeous (at least to Flurrypaw) golden-furred she-cat with a white muzzle and tail tip, as well as a spray of light brown spots along her back and on her forepaws. He deep copper eyes looked at her with concern and hope. "Y-yeah, of course!" The she-cat giggled. "I'm Specklepaw. And you are...?"
"I'm Flurrypaw," answered the calico, blinking her brown eyes. "Wanna partner up for hunting practice?"
"Sure!" The two new friends bounded off to find some prey.

A/N ~ cat pictured is Flurrypaw~

Chapter 2

[image]

"There," Specklepaw hissed, her tail tip flicking slightly to the right toward a dense bush. Flurrypaw carefully eyed up the Big Oak next to the bush and clawed her way up a ways to the first branch. She watched her friend for the telltale tail flick.
Suddenly, Specklepaw stiffened and spun. Flurrypaw looked over where Specklepaw was facing and saw a group of cats. From her position she couldn't scent them, but from the bristling on her friend's back, she guessed they weren't from their clan. Flurrypaw carefully shimmied along the branch until she was over the other cats.
Rogues! She thought, since she didn't pick up any clan scents. She saw her friend's eyes dart up to her hiding place and flick her ear. She took the sign and as her friend asked what they were doing on ShadeClan territory, Flurrypaw carefully leaped from branch to branch like a squirrel and made it back to camp as quickly as she could. She jumped from an overhanging branch into the camp.
"Rogues by the Big Oak!" She screeched eyes alight with panic.
"Specklepaw is stalling now!" A group of five or six warriors formed, including the leader.
"Show us the way," the leader, Graystar, spoke with a sharpness to her voice. "We will not lose an apprentice to rogues!" The warriors cheered, and Flurrypaw darted out the entrance, following the path she took through the trees. Sounds of a fight were heard, and the warriors bounded into the clearing. Specklepaw was trapped by three rogues in one area of the clearing, and the rest spun to face the oncoming warriors.

~cat pictured is Specklepaw~

Chapter 3

[image]

Blood spattered across the ground as warrior met rogue. Flurrypaw immediately went over to fight a rogue who was trapping Specklepaw. She hadn't much training in fighting, but her instincts helped her dodge moves and attack back. Still, the rogue was easily able to overpower her and soon she was pinned underneath the rogues huge paws. She weakly pummelled the rogue's belly, hoping that it would keep it from hurting her as much as possible.

The weight was removed from her shoulders and she saw Graystar pinning the rogue on the ground face-first, clawing at its spine. She hopped up and hurried over to her friend. "You alright?" she asked, breathing heavy from fighting.

"Yeah, I think," Specklepaw replied. "Come on, let's go help the warriors get these rogues off our territory!" The two friends leapt into the battle. Unsheathing her claws, Flurrypaw distracted a rogue by clawing at its face, while Specklepaw jumped onto its back and pummelled its spine with blows. The cat screeched and rolled over. Specklepaw tried to leap out of the way, but her left legs were trapped underneath the cat. The rogue grabbed Specklepaw by the scruff and began to race away.

"No!" Flurrypaw yowled, racing after the rogue. She grabbed its tail and yanked. "Graystar! Help!" The muscular grey tabby she-cat raced over and yowled, slicing deep cuts into its chest and forelegs. The cat, not letting go of Specklepaw, brought its claws up and across Graystar's throat. Graystar convulsed, gurgling. Then Flurrypaw felt herself being lifted by the scruff.

"Let's go," the rogue carrying Specklepaw meowed, and they raced off to their home with the two young apprentices.

Then, two warriors dropped from the trees above and landed squarely on each rogues' back and the rogues let go of the apprentices. "Run!" Flamefang and his mate, a pale tabby tom, were

clawing the trapped rogues. The two apprentices bolted back to camp.

~cat pic is of Graystar~

Chapter 4

[image]

About sundown, Amberfang, the deputy, called a meeting. "Today, we have lost our noble leader, Graystar. I will become leader and gain my nine lives, but first, I shall name my deputy. The deputy will be Birchpelt."
Birchpelt was apparently the mate of Flamefang, since they had been sitting with their tails intertwined. Birchpelt stepped forward. "I will be a loyal deputy and will serve ShadeClan to the best of my abilities." He meowed, proudly puffing out his chest fur. He padded back to his place next to Flamefang and they nuzzled each other. Flurrypaw cast a sideways glance at Specklepaw, who seemed a little uncomfortable with the choice of deputy as well. Amberfang leapt off the Fallen Tree and headed to the medicine den to get strengthening herbs for her journey. She appeared a couple moments later with Dewpool the black-and-white medicine cat. Dewpool nodded, and Amberfang left out the camp entrance toward the Moonfalls.

~cat is Amberfang~

Chapter 5

Birchpelt leapt atop one of the lower branches of the Fallen Tree. "Ferntail, take Suncloud, Plantfur and Frostleaf on a hunting patrol. Treeclaw, take Ashtail and Acornshade and their apprentices on a patrol along the MapleClan border. Bumblewing, lead a patrol along the LakeClan border, and Birdcall take Cloudfur and Aspenshine along the CliffClan border." He leaped off the branch and headed to the fresh-kill pile. Flamefang padded over to Flurrypaw.

"Want to go practice hunting?" the russet tabby asked.

"Sure," Flurrypaw mewed. "Can we see if we can take Specklepaw out too? She and I make a great hunting team."

Flamefang eyed her skeptically. "Go ask Birchpelt," he sighed, sitting down to groom himself.

Flurrypaw cautiously padded over to the new deputy. "Birchpelt?" she asked dipping her head politely. "Can Specklepaw come practice hunting with Flamefang and I?"

"Sure. After all, being deputy right now will probably give me little time to train Specklepaw." the large golden tabby meowed. He beckoned Specklepaw over. "You will be training in hunting today with Flamefang and Flurrypaw," he told her. She dipped her head, clearly excited to be with her friend.

"Alright," Specklepaw answered, then the two apprentices padded over to Flamefang. He looked up from his grooming.

"Let's go." Flamefang lead the way through the fern tunnel. "Go hunt. I'll be right behind you, but hidden so I don't scare prey." The two apprentices bounded away.

"Look," Specklepaw hissed, flicking her tail toward a rabbit sitting in a clearing. FLurrypaw nodded and circled round to the other side. She waited a bit then Specklepaw leaped from the bushes and

landed a mouse-length from the prey. It began to run-- straight toward Flurrypaw's waiting claws. She pinned the rabbit down and nipped the back of its neck, causing it to go limp. They buried the prey and moved on.

About moonrise, the two apprentices went to go collect their prey. When they went back to where they had buried the rabbit, they saw foxes tearing into it. The apprentices looked at each other. Flurrypaw quickly marked a tree nearby by scratching off the bark, then the two apprentices leaped from tree to tree back to camp.

Chapter 6

[image]

"There are foxes on our territory!" Specklepaw yowled. Birchpelt shook his head.

"Why did it have to happen *now*?" he muttered, gathering a small fighting party. "Let's go," he meowed to Specklepaw and Flurrypaw, who bounded up a tree and leaped back the way they had come. Some cats followed the two apprentices, while some followed on the ground.

Flurrypaw stopped them with her tail, quietly meowing down to the ones below. "Birchpelt, what should we do?" she asked, her face peering down between leaves.

"Us on the ground will come bounding in and distract while you drop onto their backs," he mewed, then yowled and charged into the clearing. The other four or five cats on the ground followed suit, while the ones in the trees slipped from branch to branch and then leaped down onto the foxes.

Specklepaw and Flurrypaw attempted to leap down onto the same fox, but Specklepaw missed, sliding from the fox's back. After batting away Acornshade, the fox turned to the golden-brown she-cat on the ground and began batting her tiny form between its paws.

"NO!" Flurrypaw yolwed, clawing as deep as she possibly could into the fox's back and neck. Suddenly, the fox seemed to go limp under her as blood spurted between her claws. It fell down, gurgling and choking. Flurrypaw leaped down and saw the limp form of Specklepaw and darted over to her. Laying her tail over the other apprentice's, she sensed for a pulse. Noticing the other warriors were still fighting the other fox, she bent down and nuzzled Specklepaw, trying to get her onto her own back and bring her back to camp. After a few tries, she managed to get Specklepaw onto her back and went as fast as she dared to the camp.

After stumbling through the camp entrance, Flurrypaw limped into the medicine den, struggling to keep Specklepaw aloft. The pale brown tabby came forward. "Here," Sunpool mewed, carefully nudging Specklepaw into a nest.

Flurrypaw bent over and whispered in her ear. "Feel better, Specklepaw." She carefully curled up next to her in the nest to give her extra warmth. Circling them both with her fluffy tail, she closed her eyes and rested next to Specklepaw. Specklepaw's steady heartbeat lulled her to sleep.

A/N

Sorry for not updating in a while... It's just that I have a ton of AP homework. Plus my family is struggling because my grandparents are sick and a close friend just passed away. So sorry for not updating for you -_- I feel horrible about it but I honestly don't have the time or the mental energy/stability to write this right now.

Chapter 7

A loud yowl woke Flurrypaw. She raised her head, confused as to where she was for a moment. Looking around, she remembered she was in the medicine den. Hearing soft breathing next to her, she saw Specklepaw curled up with a few cobwebs dotting her pelt. Brushing them away, she nudged Specklepaw. "Specklepaw?" she mewed quietly. Getting no response, Flurrypaw carefully pulled herself from the nest and padded out of the den to see what was going on. Seeing Amberstar atop the Fallen Tree, she moved into the back row of cats to be able to hear better.

"I have just been informed of the foxes that were on our territory; one was killed and the other chased into CliffClan territory. I will send a small party of two cats -- Sunpool and Birchpelt -- over to warn them. That is all."

Flurrypaw padded away and back into the medicine den. "Flurrypaw--" a quiet mew came from her right. She turned and saw Specklepaw peering up at her. "What was that all about?"

"We fought the foxes and chased one onto CliffClan territory." Flurrypaw mewed back. "One of the foxes knocked you out and I fought it off." She was confused; Why would she be trying to impress Specklepaw? It wasn't like she-- "I'll be back in a bit," Flurrypaw mewed quickly. "I think I hear Flamefang calling me." She turned and jogged off, searching for her mentor. She needed to speak to him.

Finding him she mewed, "Flamefang! I need to talk to you."

He turned, eyes anxious. "What is it?"

"Not here," she hissed. Flurrypaw led him to a secluded area by the nursery. When they reached the spot, she turned. "I think I have a crush... on Specklepaw." She looked down.

"Hey, it's cool," he meowed comfortingly. "Do you want me to help

you tell her?"

Flurrypaw nodded, and the two carefully padded over to the medicine cat den. "Specklepaw? Are you awake?" Flurrypaw mewed.

Specklepaw rolled over. "Hm? What's up?"

Flurrypaw took a big breath, then said something to the effect of, "Ithinkilikeyou."

Specklepaw looked confused. "What?"

"I... think I like you... as more than a friend."

"What!?!"

Chapter 8

"You are a curse to our society." Specklepaw growled. She leaped off hurriedly. "I shouldn't even be touching you," she sniffed, turning tail with her head high and stomping off.

Flurrypaw swallowed back sobs and ran to her spot beside the nursery and let the sobs out. Flamefang came up next to her. "Hey, it's alright," he meowed comfortingly. "She just wasn't the right one. You will find the right one and stay with them as long as you live, then in StarClan." He looked over at Birchpelt, his eyes brightening. "I had the same thing happen to me," he murmured. "I developed a crush on a tom named Thrushpaw. We went into battle started over a border skirmish - the battle which led me to my warrior ceremony - and Thrushpaw and I were fighting side-by-side. We had originally taken on a warrior, but then two others joined the fight. Thrushpaw was hurled into a tree and I ran over. His breath rattled in his chest, and I thought he was unconscious and going to die. I didn't want him dying before he knew. I told him, and his eyes opened, full of anger. He screeched how much he couldn't be friends with me being gay, and the screeching left him so exhausted he couldn't breathe. He died there, in that spot." He looked down, and Flurrypaw was surprised to see tears glistening in her strong mentor's eyes. "I always hated myself after that. I believed I was the reason he died, though he was dying anyway." He sighed, blinking away his tears. "Let's go for a hunt," Flurrypaw suggested. Flamfang nodded and they padded out of the entrance.

About halfway through the hunt, Flurrypaw smelled a rabbit. She flicked her tail, calling Flamefang to circle to the other side. She waited for the tail flick letting her know she was in position. Instead of the tail flick, she heard a screech and hissing. She darted toward the noise.

She found Flamefang fighting off a couple of kittypets. She was surprised she hadn't scented them.

"WAIT!" one of them meowed. "We want to join your Clan!" Flamefang hissed. "ShadeClan does not accept kittypets," Smirking, he meowed, "Go ask CliffClan, I heard they need some recruits." Flamefang sent a glance over at Flurrypaw. "Or... Flurrypaw, send a

message to Amberstar about these kittypets. I'll make sure they won't get away."
Flurrypaw twitched her ear to let him know she'd heard, then darted into the underbrush.